DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 149 650 HE 009 522

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TITLE U 68--A Study in the Origins of the Reform of Higher Education. R&D for Higher Education.
INSTITUTION National Swedish Board of Universities and Colleges, Stockholm. Research and Development Unit.
PUB DATE 77
NOTE 8p.
AVAILABLE FROM National Swedish Board of Universities and Colleges, PO Box 16334, S-103 Stockholm, Sweden

EDRS PRICE MF-$0.83 HC-$1.67 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS Change Strategies; Decision Making; *Educational Change; *Foreign Countries; *Government Role; Government School Relationship; Higher Education; *Legislation; Political Influences; *Public Policy
IDENTIFIERS *Sweden

ABSTRACT

In Sweden recent education policy has been aimed at the reform of higher education. This study is concerned with the political decisionmaking process in which a variety of public demands were articulated and reconciled in legislation for reform. It has three purposes: (1) analysis of this decisionmaking process; (2) reconstruction of the higher education reform strategy of the 1960's and 1970's; and (3) discussion of the social conditions determining the decisionmaking process and reform strategy. Official reports, internal and external committee material, and official publications and press reports are the source material for the study. The results are summarized in this report. (MSE)

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R & D for Higher Education

INFORMATION ON RESEARCH AND DEVELOPMENT FOR HIGHER EDUCATION

ED149650

CURRENT PROJECT 1977:7

PROJECT TITLE: U 68 - A study in the origins of the reform of higher education

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BACKGROUND AND PURPOSE

In Sweden as in most other advanced industrial nations during the past ten or fifteen years, education policy has among other things been aimed at the reform of higher education. Efforts in this direction were very clearly manifested in the appointment of the 1968 Education Commission (U 68) and in the whole of the political process initiated thereby. One of the conspicuous features of the reform process has been the aim of Government and Riksdag to improve the possibility to plan higher education in terms of general societal and political goals. Articulated aims of this governance interest have mainly been concerned with changes within the units of higher education and in their relationship to the community at large. The aim of "democratizing" internal organization is one example of the former type of change aspired to. Above all, however, efforts have been made to bring about an adjustment to the community at large, through the co-ordination of activi-

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ties within the higher education area with other kinds of public activity such as labour market policy, regional policy, industrial policy and social policy.

Obviously these aspirations place new demands on universities and colleges. Size, organization, siting and the direction of activities all have to be related to the general goals of the community. As a matter of principle, all higher education is expected to be vocational or vocationally preparatory. A great deal of adjustment is expected of the universities, above all in view of their traditional claim to autonomy on the grounds of the idiosyncratic nature of their activities.

Several studies of university and college policy are now in progress at the Department of Political Science in the University of Stockholm. The project presented here is concerned with the origins of the reform of higher education. In other words, it is a study of the political decision-making process in which a variety of demands were articulated and reconciled in a reform Bill. In another study Dr. Yngve Myrman is investigating the first phase of the implementation of the reform of higher education, i.e. the process in which the political content of the new legislation is being translated into practice. These investigations are being conducted in close co-operation with Rune Premfors, a research assistant engages on a comparative study of higher education policy in Sweden, France and the United Kingdom, and Dr. Björn Wittrock, who is carrying out a comparative study of research policy in Sweden, the Federal German Republic and the German Democratic Republic.

DISPOSITION

The investigation has the following three purposes.

1) To analyse the political decision-making process from which the reform of higher education emerged.

2) To reconstruct the higher education reform strategy of the 1960s and early 1970s.

3) To discuss the social conditions determining the decision-making process and reform strategy.

The source material for the study is made up of official reports, internal and external committee and drafting material, and current material relating to the practical context, such as official publications and press cuttings. In addition some thirty or more central actors in the decision-making process are being interviewed.

THE DECISION-MAKING PROCESS

Four concepts are being used to articulate the decision-making process. These are termed problems, analysis, programmes and adoption. Problems are the perceived disruptions

occurring in a system, i.e. the difficulties giving rise to political initiatives; problems in this sense are amorphous and disparate. Analysis is an actor's diagnosis of a problem. This implies that the mass of problems is classified and reduced in various ways. For example, certain problems are said to be inevitable on account of human nature or the social system. Or else certain problems are said to be merely manifestations of other, more fundamental problems. Programmes are the measures which an actor proposes in order to eliminate the perceived problems: thus a programme comprises the aims which are to be achieved and the means whereby this is to be done. Finally, adoption denotes the various activities which an actor develops in order to secure the realization of the proposed programme.

The decision-making part of the investigation will fall into four essentially descriptive sections dealing with problems, analysis, programmes and adoption in the university and college policy of the 1960s and the early 1970s. The main principle governing the selection of features in the course of events for closer consideration is the express aim of the Government and Riksdag to increase control of the direction of higher education activities. Which problems prompted these declared aims of control? How were these problems analysed by the actors involved? Which methods were proposed for the elimination of the problems in the sphere of higher education? What attempts were made to guarantee the adoptibility of the methods chosen? The section will deal with these questions on the basis of the official views of the Government and Riksdag and the views of the various actors in the sphere of higher education.

1960-1968

The first descriptive section deals with the period between 1960 and 1968. Developments during that period were characterized by growing ideas concerning a new social role for higher education. These ideas furnished justification, in purely general terms, for a heavy expansion. Gradually however, particular problems become more and more clearly apparent in the documents. These problems include the sectoral proportions of higher education, its total dimensions, its internal efficiency and its social recruitment. The aim is to show how these problems were interpreted in official documents and by different actors, to show how reforms were discussed and carried out and to characterize the actual process of reform. The reform was claimed to be "continuous" in the sense that the transformation of higher education proceeded by stages and with reference to those elements of the system which were judged to be critical. One effect of this was an overwhelming predominance of experts and officials in the planning context. Towards the end of the sixties this predomi-

nance of experts and officials in the planning context. Towards the end of the sixties this predominance came to be regarded as a political problem, and it was one of the factors influencing the recruitment of the 1968 Education Commission.

From 1968 to spring 1971, inclusive

The second descriptive section covers the period between 1968 and spring 1971 inclusive. The main task here is to elucidate the way in which problems in the sphere of higher education were analysed officially and by various actors. One of the natural points of departure here is the composition adopted for the U 68 Commission. On what grounds did the Government and the education authorities opt for a body of officials combined with reference groups in spite of the express demands of the non-socialist parties for a parliamentarian body? The Government and the education authorities seem to have regarded their type of construction as a natural consequence of the continuous planning technique of the 1960s, the reference groups being an attempt to involve the various interest groups in the experts' planning activities. In other respects too, the analytical forms of U 68 represented a bid for innovative investigation; this is above all manifested by the debate publications.

The official picture of the problems appears in the instructions given to U 68, in the plan of research and in debate publications, all of which indicate a "wide" problem picture encompassing the relationship between higher education and the community. Approaches towards the redefinition of this picture, or at least towards its supplementation by a "narrow" one, can be traced in the reference groups, where desires were expressed for a more pedagogical emphasis in the work content. At this stage the analysis focussed on questions concerning the relations between general social objectives and the goals of higher education, higher education and the labour market/working life, the planning of higher education and educational planning in general, and higher education and social equality. The picture of results emerging from the analyses given in the debate publications and from research reports was considered by the U 68 Commission to justify the assertion that higher education was inadequately adjusted to society in several important respects; no adequate steering instruments existed to train the education system on general social targets.

Spring 1971-1973

The third descriptive section covers the period from spring 1971 up to and including 1973, which is more or less the period during which the U 68 Commission wrote its report. The important task here will be to present the content of the draft reform with particular emphasis on the policy levers proposed in the programme; intake restrictions, the siting of higher education amenities and the institutional

organization putting public representatives in the majority are examples of policy levers of this kind which were regarded as controversial. This aspect will be related to the alternative programmes which can be reconstructed from the internal actors and from the comments returned by the external actors.

March 1974 - May 1975

The fourth descriptive section covers the period from March 1974 up to and including May 1975, i.e. the period elapsing between the U 68 drafting committee and the passing by the Riksdag of the reform of higher education. At this stage the main visible actors are Social Democrats and the Centre Party. This section will deal with the compromising and negotiating mechanisms of the decision-making process. Not all "adoption problems" had been solved when the time came for the Riksdag debate. The question of the central policy lever constituted by intake restrictions was not resolved until the Social Democrats and the Centre Party reached a compromise at the committee stage.

REFORM STRATEGY

The reform strategy of Swedish higher education policy will be reconstructed on the basis of the analysis made of the decision-making process, starting with a systematic account of the changes undergone by higher education during the 1960s and 1970s. These changes appear to have affected all central elements of higher education, such as form of finance, sectoral dimensions, total dimensions, systems of student finance, external administration, internal administration, organization of studies, forms of instruction, rules of eligibility/admission and institutional organization. The preliminary assumption has been made that reform strategy underwent certain changes at the end of the 1960s. Equally preliminary hypotheses are that these changes can be characterized as a transition

a) from a partial perspective to a total perspective, i.e. from attempts at reform by the stepwise alteration of what were taken to be critical elements of the system to efforts to transform the whole of the higher education system and its relation to other education and society at large in a single continuum.

b) from a reactive approach to a planning approach, i.e. from efforts to deal with "crises" in the system when they crop up to efforts to incorporate in the system mechanisms which will actively operate in the direction desired.

EDUCATION AND SOCIETY

In the concluding section, reform strategy will be viewed in relation to the social conditions by which it appears to have been determined. There can be no question here of a purely empirical analysis. Instead the official strategy will be related to relevant literature on the theory of education. The relation of education to society will be discussed in terms of boundary and influential factors. The term boundary refers to social conditions which are presumed in theories of education to impose particular limits on the functioning and development potential of education systems. It is probably universally accepted that, one way or another, the economic structure of a society imposes certain restrictions on the functioning and development potential of education systems, and the question is also being discussed as to whether certain limits are imposed by the ideology of society. The term "influential factors" in this analysis will refer to conditions in society which contribute towards or influence the design of education systems without setting any absolute limits to their development. This may be presumed to apply to political and institutional conditions, e.g. the forms of educational planning, the traditions of education systems and the balance of power between the actors in the sphere of higher education. On the basis of these deliberations, consideration will be given to the possibility of designing a general theory concerning the relationship between education and society.

TIMETABLE

The project began in 1975 and a final report will be presented in 1978.

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1977-04-25